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ABSTRACT

The history and goals of the League of Schools Reaching Out, a national program of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE), is described in this report. The league is IRE's principal national strategy to show how family/community/school partnerships can contribute to school restructuring aimed at increasing the academic and social success of all children, especially those labeled "at risk," through community outreach. The league is an alternative approach to educational reform designed to demonstrate the potential effectiveness of a comprehensive, ecological approach to restructuring in which school reform is directly linked to family support and education, neighborhood social and economic development, integrated services for poor families, and means for family contribution to children's development. IRE provides little direct funding, but offers information and technical assistance. The program is based on the following core ideas: a clear ideological focus; demonstration of need; an action plan; provision of recognition, outside help, and "loving criticism"; and availability of discretionary funding. A conclusion is that leadership, financial support, technology, and a national spirit are crucial for success. (9 references) (LMI)

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TESTING A STRATEGY FOR REFORM: THE LEAGUE OF SCHOOLS REACHING OUT

by Don Davies

Prepared for a Symposium at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting in Chicago, April 3, 1991

For the better part of four decades I have been an observer of and a participant in successive waves of educational reform trying to make American society and American schools more equitable, responsive, and productive.

I have been a reformee as a teacher in school and college classrooms, a grantor of funds from the Federal government to stimulate schools and universities to change, a teachers union official encouraging teachers to initiate substantial reforms from the inside, the director of a parent and citizen advocacy organization promoting significant reform, and most recently the director of a Federally-funded center seeking to put good research

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and development ammunition in the hands of parents, community people, and teachers promoting the social and academic success of all children.

Sprinkled through these years have been many failures, large and small -- and some strong successes -- many grounds for pessimism and despair about how difficult and slow institutional and social change are -- but also grounds for continued optimism and some tangible and important achievements.

But I am not ready to write my memoirs about all of these years, to attempt a grand summing up, or to offer a valedictory. In fact, I will wait to sum up until I can include the history of our newest reform effort -- the League of Schools Reaching Out, which is a direct outgrowth of the Schools Reaching Out project, the focus of this symposium. In this paper I want to describe the League and discuss briefly some of the elements of the strategy that the Institute for Responsive Education is using.

What is the League of Schools Reaching Out?

The League is a national project of the Institute for Responsive Education (IRE). The League is IRE's principal national strategy to seek to show how family/community/school partnerships can contribute significantly to school restructuring aimed directly at increasing the academic and social success of all children, especially those society labels "at risk." Most importantly, the League is real schools -- public, private, urban, and rural -- that are doing extraordinary things to promote the success of all

children through family and community outreach. For example, under the leadership of Principal Mildred Foster, the Miles Park Elementary School in Cleveland has made great strides in student achievement and behavior by integrating parents and community resources into the day-by-day life of the school in dozens of important ways. The parent presence has changed the culture of the school. Community resources -- such as the police department's DARE program -- have greatly expanded the school's capacity to serve both children and families.

The Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School in Boston is another example of what the League is all about. Principal Steven Leonard believes that parent and community involvement in their multiple forms have literally saved the school from extinction and helped the teachers bring about major improvements in student success. Both of these schools see the League as giving credibility to their successful local efforts.

The League as a network of schools began with a national videoconference in May 1990, beamed from Boston to nineteen mini-conferences across the country and carried live by The Learning Channel.

There were initially about 40 urban schools which applied and were accepted for membership. All were public schools, mostly elementary, with a handful of pre-schools, junior high schools, and senior high schools. All are schools that serve a substantial number of low-income children.

Beginning in the spring of 1991, the League will expand to

about 65 members by adding several rural schools, some private schools that serve a diverse population, and clusters of schools in regions and states not now represented. The expanded League will include more junior and senior high schools.

Schools become members by submitting a written application -- using a form which IRE provides -- prepared by a group of key people in the school -- principal, parents, teachers, and representatives of other community agencies.

What does the League seek to do?

We seek to affect change at two levels: If we are successful the individual League schools and their communities will discover new and lasting ways to improve the academic and social success of all their children. In the process there will be dozens of test cases demonstrating to policy makers, opinion shapers, and educators what is possible -- and what is imperative -- when genuine restructuring takes place within a community of learners.

Much of what is called restructuring these days focuses on schedules, calendars, organization, management changes, new decision-making councils, staff development, individualized curriculum and instruction, and imaginative use of new technology. The proposed changes are primarily inside the school. Many are very promising and deserve support, but I believe that they're insufficient to cut the roots of social and economic paralysis which leads to the magnitude of our educational failure.

Only an ecological approach is likely to succeed. A child's

world is in fact an ecosystem composed of a multitude of interconnected relationships, circumstances, and conditions. Many institutions can have a shaping influence on the life of a single child: family, neighborhood, school or daycare center, social organizations, government, church, etc. The social, physical, emotional, spiritual, and academic development of the child are deeply affected by these institutions. As with a natural ecosystem, what happens in one part of the child's ecology affects the child and affects the other parts or subsystems as well.

What this means among other things is that a system that permits hundreds of thousands of children to fail -- children of color, children who are poor and from socially marginal families both urban and rural, children whose families are immigrants or whose primary language is not English, children with disabilities -- such a system is fundamentally flawed. Whether or not everyone recognizes it, it's a problem for us all.

Schools, families, communities, organizations and agencies (including government, businesses and financial institutions, churches, civic organizations, community organizations, post-secondary educational institutions) are all part of the problem -- the social and academic failure of from one quarter to one half of all children in the United States and the staggering social and economic problems of poor families and communities. An ecological solution to an ecological disaster requires that they all must participate in solving the problem -- through collaborative planning and coordinated programming -- through partnerships and

through a new social contract for children.

In short, the League of Schools Reaching Out is an alternative approach to educational reform. It is designed to demonstrate -- in a variety of real schools and communities from coast to coast and in other countries as well -- the potential effectiveness of a comprehensive, ecological approach to restructuring in which school reform is directly linked to family support and education, neighborhood social and economic development, integrated services for poor children and their families, and multiple ways that families can contribute to the development and learning of their own children both in school and out. It's a matter of tapping and uniting the capacities and resources that now exist in our families, communities, schools, and professional institutions.

How such an ecological approach to the challenge might take shape can be seen at Vaughn Elementary School in San Fernando, CA. The school's principal, Yvonne Chan is initiating a comprehensive program making the school a "one stop hub of social services for the family," including a family service center offering employment training, immigration services, and many other resources; training of daycare providers; a network of community block captains -- one for every five blocks -- to contact for assistance in case of domestic violence, for suicide counseling, and other social needs; parent education, and a number of other crucial services. Ms. Chan expects to have the program up and running in July.

What is Our Strategy for Change?

In this project, the Institute for Responsive Education is seeking schools which find the League's ideas and approaches attractive and see some direct benefits coming from their participation. They are volunteers. IRE provides little if any direct funding but offers information, technical assistance, research reports and other publications, recognition, and opportunities for competing for grants (as noted below). IRE expects the schools to offer sites for studies, willingly exchange information and ideas with other members, document and report on their work, and to find ways to use the reports and materials produced by IRE and the Family Center. The League needs to be seen and assessed both as a national network and reform strategy and a collection of individual schools implementing their own plans for increasing student success through family-community-school collaboration.

IRE's strategy for a national network of reform-oriented schools is based on seven core ideas about a national, multi-site strategy for school reform.

1. IDEOLOGY -- There is need for a clear ideological focus or framework.
2. FELT NEED -- Key participants must feel a need for substantial change in present policies and practices.
3. ACTION PLAN -- There is a need for an action plan with appropriate and do-able ways and means to implement the ideology.

4. OUTSIDE HELP - There is knowledgeable outside help available on a regular basis.

5. RECOGNITION -- The effort brings recognition and visibility to the participants.

6. DISCRETIONARY MONEY -- There is discretionary money available.

7. "LOVING CRITICS" -- Schools need both respect and useful criticism. Third-party reform-agents can provide this balanced perspective.

I will comment briefly on each of these components and for each suggest some of the major questions that we are interested in answering over the next three years.

1. IDEOLOGY

IRE seeks to imbue the League overall and its member schools with two ideas that are, in fact, an ethos or an ideological framework: A. All children can learn and achieve social and academic success, including those children that are considered most "at risk," least likely to succeed. This radical notion challenges the conventional belief in many American schools that some students (often a substantial percentage) are destined not to "make it," to benefit little from the school's offerings because of the characteristics of their families or communities and their own perceived disabilities and deficits, such as lack of motivation, laziness, or a temperament unsuited to academic work.

B. Such an ambitious goal as success for all children can only be achieved through the combined and coordinated efforts of school

staff, families, and other community agencies and resources. The ethos is about partnership with mutually beneficial and continuous communication and exchange among the school, family, and community. Partnership becomes the school's standard way of doing business rather than an occasional event (such as an open house for parents, a celebration sponsored by a local business).

These twin ideas represent a distinctly different mind-set or vision of the inclusiveness of schools' objectives and the centrality of the idea of the overlapping responsibilities of families, communities, and schools for children's success. This ideology provides the overall vision for what the League is and what its member schools are seeking to achieve.

League documents try to make the ideology quite clear, but I am not at all certain how widely it is understood or accepted in the League schools. Even if such an ideology seems clear and compelling to the IRE sponsors, it will not be very powerful part of a reform strategy if it is not "owned" by substantial numbers of teachers, administrators, parents, and community representatives in the League schools.

How can this ownership be developed? How can the ideology be more than words in speeches and proposals and actually aid the positive efforts by school staffs and parents? Will administrators, teachers, and parents find the time to discuss their common visions and clarify and refine the ideology? Some League schools are already beginning to address these powerful

questions. For example, the Kate Sullivan Elementary School in Tallahassee, Florida, has adopted and discussed this vision statement: "It is our vision that all individuals connected with the Kate Sullivan School demonstrate quality in life style, in academic achievement, and in performance through successful goal attainment."

We will be collecting evidence over the next three years about schools' efforts to build "success for all" and "family and community collaboration" visions into their everyday school practice.

2. FELT NEED

As Brooks and Sussman point out, the literature on change consistently discusses "the importance of recognizing and responding to a specified need as a key and early step in the change process." (Brooks and Sussman 1990). This is often a very soft spot in local and national reform efforts. The need is felt by the outside intervenor or a district superintendent; the schools often respond because they must. The results are often disappointing when there is not a common agreement that there is something wrong that needs to be fixed. It is more difficult for school "insiders" to admit that something is wrong because by doing so they must question their own practices.

In the case of the League schools, we hope that there was sufficient felt need at least on the part of a principal to apply for membership and agree to meet the obligations of such

membership.

Schools that are most successful will likely be the ones where the felt need is more broadly owned and where substantial numbers of teachers, staff, parents, and other community members can agree on the nature of the problems and needs to be addressed. "The decision to structure parent involvement programming around the ideas of district or school administrators does not engender the kind of teacher commitment needed to make change happen." (Brooks and Sussman 1990)

How can "insiders" and "outsiders" talk about the need for change without making the "insiders" defensive and resentful? How do school leaders help to motivate teachers and staff to recognize the need for change?

One good example of a successful move in this direction is the Graham and Parks Alternative Public School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where teams of teachers and parents work on all aspects of school life identifying needed changes and proposing solutions to problems. Our experience in working with League schools over three years should provide other useful examples about how "joint ownership" of the need for change can be developed.

3. PLAN OF ACTION

Ideology and an agreement about the need to change are not enough. A national strategy such as the League must provide participating schools with clear direction about what to do as well as how to do it.

In the League we will suggest a broad and comprehensive approach providing a wide range of family and community collaboration projects. But, more specifically, we suggest three key mechanisms: a parent center; home visitors or parent support workers; and teacher action research teams with teacher mini-grants. (Davies 1990, Krasnow 1990).

This strategy offers a comprehensive framework: the parent center creates a physical presence for parents in the school and an instrument (through the parent coordinator) for planning and carrying out a wide range of parent involvement and parent education activities. The parent support worker component reaches out to that large constituency of families that is not well connected to the school and is often reluctant to come to the school at all. Parent education and support are taken into the home by trained community people. The action research component addresses the all-important need to involve classroom teachers. In this case the teams study school-family-community issues and problems, and propose and implement solutions. Teacher mini-grants provide small amounts of money and recognition to teachers who have ideas about improving their own classroom instruction and curriculum by collaboration with families and/or community agencies.

Many good examples can be found in League schools. For example, the Sarah Greenwood School in Boston has begun a Parent Center using Chapter 1 funds to cover part of the salary of a staff person in the Center. Community School 92 in the South Bronx is

creating a Family Room near the school entrance with a day care room for infants and toddlers and is seeking funding for staffing and programs. P.S. 111 in Manhattan's District 2 is providing teacher mini-grants to support a wide range of imaginative outreach activities related to classroom activities.

The three-part approach touches all of the League's six part typology of parent/community involvement -- 1) school help for families (e.g. home visitors, workshops in the parent center); 2) family help for teachers (e.g. parent tutors organized by the Parent Center staff); 3) family help for children's learning at home (e.g. home visitors demonstrate how parents can read to their children and assist with their school work); 4) school-home communication (e.g. teacher research teams identifying barriers to good communication); 5) family involvement in decision-making and advocacy (e.g. parent/teacher committees planning reaching out programs); and 6) community-school exchanges (e.g. Parent Center staff and home visitors referring families to social organizations and arranging for coordinated services between the school and other social agencies.)

In order to provide specific help on how to implement this three part program, we are going to prepare a League tool-kit or resource book which will provide step-by-step advice on how to proceed to set up a parent center, for instance, with examples from our own project and other League schools.

Through an annotated the League Directory, members can discover which schools are implementing which kinds of programming

and seek help directly from their peers.

One of the important questions for any external intervenor is how directive to be. In this project we intend to be as direct and explicit as possible about what might be done and how to do it, offering clear information about options, but recognizing that the decisions must be made in the schools. We have no authority or mandate to go beyond providing information and making the alternative courses of action. We plan to develop and test a variety of methods and styles of providing needed "technology" as schools seek to implement their plans and to learn much more about which technologies work under what conditions. We believe that we will learn a good deal about effective transfer processes for ideas and "technologies" from third-party intervenors to school staff and parents.

In addition, ideas about what to do and how to do it will be communicated on a regular basis by the Boston and field staff through a bimonthly newsletter and resource packets.

4. ON-SITE HELP

Skilled and committed field staff are a central part of IRE's strategy for the League. We recognize that we cannot imbue an ideology, motivate school staffs and parents about the need for change, and transfer ideas about what to do and how solely through newsletters, tool-kits, videotapes, and other "cool" media. We need frequent and continuous on-site contact. The project will engage a crew of experienced field facilitators on a part-time basis. We

will recruit people who have had experience as third-party intervenors and who find our ideology and technology appealing. We will be especially interested in people who are already affiliated with compatible endeavors.

We will provide three days of orientation and training in the early fall of 1991 and then arrange for continuous communication between the field staff and the League Director and other staff in Boston.

Our field staff will also be equipped to "broker" other consultant help for League schools, calling on staff of the Family Center, members of our International Network of Scholars, Regional Lab staff, and other people with expertise on various topics. In many cases, the League staff will assist the member schools to make lasting partnerships with nearby universities or other organizations and to become affiliated with other reform networks (e.g. Comer process, Accelerated Schools, Coalition of Essential Schools.)

An early example of this component of the strategy is in the Boston-Cambridge-Chelsea cluster of the League, where IRE staffer Nick Donohue is working with the administrators, teachers, and parents at the Peabody School in Cambridge at their request to help them plan and carry out a survey on the need for school reform. A second example is at P.S. 111 in New York City where Barbara Jackson has been invited to be a continuing consultant and secretary for the school-parent-community planning council, which is assuming an active role in the school's improvement efforts.

We have an unusual opportunity to document and learn from the steps which we take to recruit and train field staff and from the procedures and styles which the field task bring to their on-site work in League schools. We will explore a variety of questions about what kinds of on-site help League schools request, how they use it, and what the results are.

5. RECOGNITION AND VISIBILITY

School administrators, teachers, and parents involved in school reform effort in schools usually get little positive recognition or publicity to reinforce their hard work, successes, and willingness to take risks. Too often they get penalized or criticized for being "rate-busters" and "glory-hounds."
We see recognition as a key element in making a the League of Schools Reaching out work as a national strategy for school reform. Some of the activities that we plan to address the recognition need are:

A. Seven annual national awards of $1,000 each for principals, teachers, parent support workers, parent activists, and community organization representatives taking leadership roles in League schools. These awards will be decided by a committee of League representatives from nominations made by League members themselves and by educators and civic leaders in the communities where member schools are located. We will seek to give visibility to the nomination and award process and to the winners in both local and

national media.

B. We are devoting a portion of our limited staff funding to hiring a writer and public relations specialist who will work steadily with League schools to enhance the local recognition and visibility which they get and to gain recognition for the League itself. Large scale reform endeavors such as this should not be falsely modest and retiring about seeking recognition and credit when it is warranted.

C. In October 1992 IRE will sponsor the League's second national videoconference, building on the success of the first conference in May 1990. The videoconference will feature panels of principals, teachers, and parents from League schools, nationally known experts, and videotapes depicting work in League schools and their communities. The local videotapes will be a way to gain national audience for exemplary projects.

It is anticipated that the videoconference will be beamed from Boston by satellite to dozens of mini-conferences organized by League schools and will also be carried by a national cable network such as was done by the Learning Channel for the 1990 videoconference. The 1992 videoconference will be interactive, with international as well as domestic call-ins.

D. IRE's magazine Equity and Choice will publish articles by administrators, teachers, and parents from the League schools, and

interviews with them, as well as profiles of League schools written by outside observers. The Spring 1991 issue, for example, will include profiles of the Martin Luther King, Jr., Middle School in Boston, MA, Miles Park Elementary School in Cleveland, OH, Barnaby Manor Elementary School in Oxon Hill, MD, and the Comprehensive Pupil Service Center's Parenting Teen Program in Memphis, TN. The magazine will present the activities of League schools to a small but widespread audience of fellow practitioners and reformers.

E. Information about projects and successes in League schools will be regularly reported through the League network newsletter to other members and to local and national publications.

We don't need research to tell us that most people respond positively to recognition of their efforts and successes. But, we will be searching for, and testing, a wide variety of methods through which the League can be a model for change.

6. DISCRETIONARY MONEY

IRE plans to provide three kinds of financial assistance to League schools as a part of our national strategy:

1. We will offer technical assistance and consultation about potential sources of support for reaching out activities. For example, we are informing all of our members that Chapter One funds can be used to support stipends for parent coordinators or parent support workers and offering examples of how this is being done successfully.

2. We offer information about funding opportunities -- government, foundation, corporate -- that member schools may be eligible for.
3. We provide opportunities to compete for grants. For example, IRE is working with the Plan for Social Excellence in a competitive grant program which will provide three years of grant support for three League member schools. Four other League schools will be selected on a competitive basis to receive support from IRE for part of the cost of initiating parent centers, family support worker programs, and teacher action research and mini-grant projects. Other funding opportunities targeted at League schools are being developed.

We believe -- based on our experience with two pilot schools in the Schools Reaching Out project -- that small amounts of money can go along way if two conditions obtain:

A. The money is used as leverage to obtain other funding (e.g. use of foundation money to leverage Chapter One money to use in a family support program.)

B. The money is made available free of bureaucratic hurdles. Most public schools have very little discretionary money that is directly under their control and accessible to them without long, bureaucratic delays and justifications. We learned in the two pilot schools in our Schools Reaching Out project how useful it was to provide small amounts of money needed by the schools to carry out their family and community outreach activities. Examples: funds for a small group of teachers and parents to visit another school to observe an exciting project in action; funds for refreshments

for a community culture event; stipends for parent support workers to visit homes; purchasing children's books and tote bags for a read-aloud program for kindergartners; registration fees for teachers to attend conferences; coffee and refreshments for the parent center; funds for installing a telephone in a parent center and paying the monthly charges.

For the League schools, we will be able to provide some small financial support to some schools and advice through our staff and reports about where and how to get other financial support as a leverage for obtaining larger Federal and state funding.
The League's ideology and action plan are not "big ticket" items but some leverage and discretionary dollars can be very useful to schools seeking to reach out.

Part of our research agenda for the next three years will be to determine what family and community outreach programs currently cost and what sources of funding are used. Based on these data, we hope to be able to make policy and budget recommendations.

7. LOVING CRITICS

Years ago John Gardner pointed out that the society's institutions are threatened from two sides, by unloving critics who would attack and destroy the institutions and by uncritical lovers who would smother the institutions in an overly protective, unquestioning embrace. He said that society needs "loving critics." That concept is the way IRE sees its relationships to schools. We believe that researchers and third-party intervenors

should approach schools with a caring and constructive attitude that is strongly informed by a recognition of schools as complex political institutions. But, they also must, to be consistent with the "loving critic" idea, identify flaws in policy and practice that stand in the way of progress. They must be able to assess and diagnose in a straight-forward and tough-minded way at the same time as they approach the task with caring, patience, and understanding of political and institutional realities.

International component

With the support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, IRE began in April 1991 to develop possibilities for League affiliation in several other countries. The international component includes the newly formed International Network of Scholars being created by the National Research and Development Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. The Center is identifying people in the United States and throughout the world who are studying various aspects of family--community-school collaboration. It is our intent that the expansion of the League to other countries and the creation of the International Network of Scholars will lead to collaborations across national and cultural boundaries, exploring how family-community-school partnerships enhance children's learning.

I know from my own experience of doing informal studies in Liverpool and Portugal that the barriers that separate educators from families and communities are very similar and that

interventions designed in one setting can be successfully adapted in another. For example, the Parent Center idea which is central in many League of Schools Reaching Out sites is an adaptation of a parent center and parent support project in Liverpool.

The international component of the League was launched on April 2, 1991, with the International Roundtable on Families, Communities, and Schools held in Chicago immediately preceding the AERA meeting. Individuals from nine countries participated, in addition to those from the United States: Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Singapore. After the Roundtable, ten of the international visitors spent a week in Boston meeting with staff of the Family Center and the League and visiting League schools in the Boston-Cambridge-Chelsea cluster.

The League's Roots

The idea for the League has two important roots. First, IRE's two year Schools Reaching Out Project which has been abundantly reported in a series of research and project reports (Brooks and Sussman, 1990; Davies, 1990; Heleen, 1990; Jackson 1990; Johnson 1990, Krasnow, 1990, Equity and Choice, Spring 1990), and in the 1991 AERA Schools Reaching Out symposium.

This project produced a rich vein of learnings about the process and results when schools reach out, about strategies for change within schools, and about how "third-party" reform organizations such as IRE can best contribute to school changes.

We have built these learnings into the design of the League and will continue to draw on these reports as the project becomes fully implemented in the coming months.

Second, we draw on the past and current parallel efforts of other organizations and researchers. Most specifically, James Comer's school development process which has now been extended to dozens of schools across the country. Comer's work emphasizes the connections between all aspects of the child's development -- physical, emotional, and cognitive and provides direct support for children in all of these aspects. Comer also insists that families must be involved in decision-making and school governance and not be seen as the passive beneficiaries of the decisions of others. We also draw on the work of Henry Levin and the Accelerated Schools Program which has expanded from two pilot schools in the San Francisco Bay Area to several other parts of the country. Schools in the Accelerated School network seek to speed up rather than slow down the learning process for "at risk" children and involve teachers and parents in decision-making. We also draw on the extensive studies of Joyce Epstein who points to the key role of classroom teachers in school links with families and has developed a five part typology of parent/school collaboration. From both Epstein and Dorothy Rich's Home School Institute we borrow ideas and materials to help parents become more effective teachers of their own children at home. We also have been influenced importantly by the work of Moncreiff Cochran who sees parent empowerment as a core purpose and bases his work on the belief that

all families have strengths as well as problems and that cultural diversity can be a resource not a liability.

We owe an intellectual debt to David Seeley, who in his book Education through Partnership calls for a new vision of education in which responsibility for the development and success of all children is shared by school, students, family, and community. These are some of the major influences on the development of the League of Schools Reaching Out strategy. But, all of the individual schools have their own local and special inspirations and sources of ideas.

How is the League supported?

Funds have been obtained from several foundations for a three year project beginning in the Spring of 1991: the two primary supporters of the national effort are The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Other support, especially for the League cluster in New York City, comes from the Aaron Diamond Foundation and the Leon Lowenstein Foundation. Important initial support also was given by the Plan for Social Excellence. The Boston Globe Foundation is supporting part of the work of the cluster in Boston, Cambridge, and Chelsea. We are expecting additional support from two other national foundations, which cannot be named at this time.

From time to time we expect to make funding opportunities available to League schools on a competitive basis. The first such opportunity was provided by the Excellent Beginnings project of

the Plan for Social Excellence which distributed an RFP to League members in the fall of 1991 and received applications from many of them. Three schools have been selected to receive grants from the Plan to carry out three year early education improvement programs including a Schools Reaching Out strategy. Support in terms of staff time and publications also comes from the new National Research and Development Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning. IRE is one of the members of the consortium that makes up the Center, along with Boston University, University of Illinois (Champaign-Urbana), The Johns Hopkins University, Yale University, and Wheelock College.

The League members will be significant users of the Center's reports and in many cases will provide data and serve as sites for Center studies.

Final comments

I have a strong personal interest in how well the League strategy works. As I said at the outset of this paper, I am drawing on my many years of experience as a reformee and reformer to oversee what some in Boston might choose to call my "Last Hurrah." I have high hopes for success. This optimism is buoyed every time I visit or hear from one of the League schools and am reminded of what exciting and imaginative things are happening. But, my optimism is tempered by every example that is reported of how the bureaucracies and traditions of state and local school and social service systems get in the way of grassroots efforts or how

financial crises threaten the very life for these fledgling efforts at restructuring.

I view the League of Schools Reaching Out as one part of the national and international movement for educational reform and school and social service restructuring. Whether our reform project or the broader reform movement will sink or succeed, will be strongly influenced by whether the society's leadership has the political will and skill to attack in a sustained way the intertwined problems of poverty, housing, health, social services, and education that we face.

If the kind of leadership, money, technology, and national spirit that was summoned for the successful war in the Persian Gulf can be brought to bear on the domestic crises which the Schools Reaching Out project seeks to address, then our chances for success are very good. If this doesn't happen, in this project and others like it, we will be rowing against the tide.

Should we wait for the tide to turn? I don't think so. Thousands of educators, families, and communities involved in the League of Schools Reaching Out, along with so many others, are now sweating and rowing, seeking successes and progress where they can be found. As more and more individuals and communities join in, they may become the tide, the new movement that might finally arrest the swirling maelstrom of educational inequity and social instability.

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